

# To Your Health Newsletter

“Promoting Good Health Through Information”

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System

Veteran Health Education Newsletter • Fall 2011

# Let's make a PACT!

*Kelly Hautala, MS, MA, RN, Nurse Specialist,  
Patient Aligned Care Team*

The Veterans Health Administration began implementation of the patient-centered medical home model now known as PACT (Patient Aligned Care Team) with the overall goal of transforming the VA health care delivery system to provide more patient-centered care. The focus is on Veterans and their families being in control of their health care and redesigning the system around the needs of the Veteran.

## What does this mean for you as a VA patient?

- *Your care will be an expansion of our current team-based approach.* You are the center of the care team that also includes your family members, caregivers, and your health care professionals—primary care provider, nurse care coordinator, clinical associate, and administrative clerk. When additional services are needed to meet your goals and needs, other care team members may be called.
- *You will receive coordinated care through collaboration.* All members of your team have clearly defined roles. They meet often to talk with each other about your progress toward achieving your health goals. The focus is on creating trusted, personal relationships, and the result is coordination of all aspects of your health care.
- *You have many ways to access health care.* Our goal is for you to get the right care you need at the right time. In addition to the traditional face-to-face visits with your provider, we are making other options available as well. For example, you may schedule a visit with other members of your team. You also may have access to group clinics and educational seminars, plus a wealth of information on the Internet through My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet ([www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)). You can also communicate with members of your PACT by telephone or through Secure Messaging (which is like secure email) via My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet. You may have a decreased need to see your primary health care provider for face-to-face visits because of increased access through telephone appointments and secure messaging.

Because you are the center of the care team, you will be encouraged to be an active participant in your health care management. This ensures that your wants, needs, and preferences are respected and the whole team is engaged in meeting your health care goals. Other members of the team provide information and ideas, the benefits of their knowledge and experience, plus counsel and support. Each PACT is patient-centered and Veterans have a say and take ownership of their health care.

# *Recipe for Health*

## **CANNERY ROW SOUP**

**Fish and clam juice give this soup a hearty taste of the sea.**

### **Ingredients:**

2 lb varied fish fillets (such as haddock, perch, flounder, cod, sole), cut into 1-inch cubes  
2 Tbsp olive oil  
1 clove garlic, minced  
3 carrots, cut in thin strips  
2 C celery, sliced  
1/2 C onion, chopped  
1/4 C green peppers, chopped  
1 can (28 oz) whole tomatoes, cut up, with liquid  
1 C clam juice  
1/4 tsp dried thyme, crushed  
1/4 tsp dried basil, crushed  
1/8 tsp black pepper  
1/4 C fresh parsley, minced

### **Directions:**

1. Heat oil in large saucepan. Sauté garlic, carrots, celery, onion, and green pepper in oil for 3 minutes.
2. Add remaining ingredients, except parsley and fish. Cover and simmer for 10–15 minutes or until vegetables are fork tender.
3. Add fish and parsley. Simmer covered for 5–10 minutes more or until fish flakes easily and is opaque.
4. Serve hot.

**Yield:** 8 servings

**Serving size:** 1 cup

### **Each serving provides:**

Calories: 170  
Total fat: 5 g  
Saturated fat: less than 1 g  
Cholesterol: 56 mg  
Sodium: 380 mg  
Total fiber: 3 g  
Protein: 22 g  
Carbohydrates: 9 g  
Potassium: 710 mg

*[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)*

# Peer Support: A Path to Staying Socially Active

*Jocelyn Reyes-Pagsolingan, CTRS, Recreation Therapist*

Companionship is very important. Being around a companion whom you enjoy can help reduce stress, especially during times of struggle, recovery and rehabilitation. Whether you are trying to lose weight, stop smoking, avoid alcohol or accept a new disability, the right companion can help you make healthy and wise choices. More importantly, if the support you are receiving is from someone who has previously walked your path, you will feel more understood and appreciated. It's called peer support.

Peer support is being a friend (with similar struggles) who can offer words of wisdom, a listening ear, and a caring heart to the other person. The simple words, "*You are not alone*" and "*I get you*" from a peer speaks volumes. Getting together to do social activities with your peers, like traveling or playing softball, can help energize your spirit and cope with daily stressors.

How many times have you tried to start a new exercise program only to quit along the way? Honestly, starting anything is tough, but with a friend as your coach, his/her encouragement can make it harder for you to make excuses and quit. Essentially, your peer can be one of your biggest cheerleaders.

For some people, finding the right companion may be a challenge. Where am I going to find somebody who I can feel comfortable with? Well, think about where you spend most of your time. Is it at work, school, a community center, church, hospital or 12-step meeting? Perhaps you spend a great deal of time on a social network site like Facebook. Wherever the location, take the risk and be willing to meet people in order to develop a bond. A simple starting point like, "Hi" can be an open door to deeper conversations in the future. Furthermore, if there is somebody who is making the effort to reach out to you, give the person a chance. You may have more in common than you realize.

Here are a few ideas to stay socially active with your peers:

- Laugh at comedy clubs
- Join an interest group, i.e., toastmasters, a book club, Sierra Club for hiking trips
- Walk with a buddy
- Join a local fitness club
- Attend festivals
- Listen to a speaker at a bookstore
- Ride along with a cycle club
- Join an organized travel group
- Volunteer for a cause
- 12-step meetings
- Church Groups
- Meet at a coffee house
- Local Senior Centers offer great social programs

The point is when you allow yourself to stay connected with positive people, the loneliness slips away, poor choices are avoided, and hope becomes a natural way of thinking. So don't wait! Call a friend and plan a fun, social outing.

Brought to you by MOVE!

# New Community Garden

*Cindie Slightam, MPH ( c ), Community Garden Co-Director*

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# STD Awareness

*Medical Epidemiologist, Office of Public Health Surveillance and Research*

Did you know that sexually transmitted diseases (STD) are on the rise in our community? Sexually transmitted diseases affect people of all ages, races and sexual orientations.

## What is an STD?

There are several illnesses that can be transmitted sexually. These include viruses such as hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), human papillomavirus (HPV), and herpes simplex virus (HSV). There are also bacterial and parasitic infections that can be transmitted sexually such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomonas, syphilis, and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). Many of these infections do not have symptoms until much later in the disease process - that is why it is important to be screened for them regularly.

## Who is at risk?

Those having unprotected intercourse (heterosexual or homosexual encounters), including vaginal, oral and anal intercourse. People who have intercourse with multiple partners are also at a greater risk.

## What should I watch for?

The symptoms for each of these illnesses vary greatly.

- HBV and HCV can have no symptoms initially or flu-like symptoms that resolve but then go on to cause severe liver disease.
- HIV can have no symptoms at first or flu-like symptoms that resolve as well, but later can develop into serious, life-threatening infections.
- HPV can cause genital warts or small growths in the genital area.
- HSV causes genital herpes that are associated with shallow ulcers in the genital area that are very painful.
- Syphilis initially forms a shallow ulcer in the genital area that is NON-painful.
- Gonorrhea, chlamydia and trichomonas can cause abnormal genital discharge. However, in some patients, particularly in men, those who are infected do not have any symptoms.
- PID can present in women with abdominal pain, vaginal discharge, fevers, painful intercourse or urination, or abnormal menstrual bleeding.

It is important to bring any of these symptoms to the attention of your medical provider. Diagnosis is made using either a blood test, urine test or a cervical sample (that can be done during a pelvic examination).

## How can these infections be prevented?

Condoms, condoms, condoms. Having protected intercourse using barrier precautions can greatly decrease your risk of acquiring a STD. Having regular STD checks done by your primary care provider can catch these illnesses early and prevent further spread.

## Why is treatment so important?

Treatment varies depending on the STD that the person has. Regardless, earlier identification and treatment is important in limiting the infection not only in that individual, but also limiting the spread of the infection to others. Some of these illnesses need to be monitored closely and treatment can prevent further progression. In addition, in young women, this is a cause of infertility that can be prevented. Many of these illnesses do not have symptoms until much later in the disease progression making routine testing important. Please ask your provider if you can be checked for the common STDs.

For further information: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/general/>

# VA Palo Alto Health Care System Facilities

## **VA PALO ALTO DIVISION**

3801 Miranda Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94304  
(650) 493-5000

## **VA LIVERMORE DIVISION**

4951 Arroyo Road  
Livermore, CA 94550  
(925) 373-4700

## **VA MENLO PARK DIVISION**

795 Willow Road  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
(650) 493-5000

## **VA CAPITOLA OPC**

1350 N. 41st Street,  
Suite 102  
Capitola, CA 95010  
(831) 464-5519

## **VA MODESTO OPC**

1524 McHenry Avenue,  
Suite 315  
Modesto, CA 95350  
(209) 557-6200

## **VA MONTEREY OPC**

3401 Engineer Lane  
Seaside, CA 93955  
(831) 883-3800

## **VA SAN JOSE OPC**

80 Great Oaks Boulevard  
San Jose, CA 95119  
(408) 363-3000

## **VA SONORA OPC**

19747 Greenley Road  
Sonora, CA 95370  
(209) 588-2600

## **VA STOCKTON OPC**

7777 Freedom Drive  
French Camp, CA 95231  
(209) 946-3400

## **World Wide Web Address:**

[www.paloalto.va.gov](http://www.paloalto.va.gov)

***Taking an active role in your care can help prevent medication errors! Carry your medication list with you at all times!***

# Tips for Healthy Living

- Every time you eat a meal, sit down, chew slowly, and pay attention to flavors and textures.
- Walk briskly through the mall and shop 'til you drop ... pounds.

[www.smallstep.gov](http://www.smallstep.gov)

## Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in [To Your Health](#) feel free to contact:

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[To Your Health](#) is published quarterly for VAPAHCS veterans and their families.

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